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# COLLEGE STUDENT PERSONNEL WORK

AS

A

CAREER

NATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION  
OF  
STUDENT PERSONNEL  
ADMINISTRATORS

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This brochure was prepared by Commission III, Development and Training of Student Personnel Administrators, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, with primary authorship by James G. Allen, Texas Technological College, and C. William Brown, Purdue University. Mrs. James G. Allen provided valuable editorial assistance.

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Additional copies are available upon request from the Secretary-Treasurer of NASPA, Mr. Carl W. Knox, Dean of Men, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois.

# **COLLEGE STUDENT PERSONNEL WORK AS A CAREER**

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## **FOREWORD**

For men and women who consider entering the field of college student personnel work, this brochure sets forth very generally the qualifications and characteristics of some who have achieved success in the profession; the variety of its emphasis; and the general circumstances in which this work is done. It is assumed that the reader is aware of the challenge in this work and the rewards for creative opportunities in the field. An early decision to enter the college student personnel field makes possible an academic training which will form the best background for professional performance.

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**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
OF STUDENT PERSONNEL  
ADMINISTRATORS**

# WHAT IS COLLEGE STUDENT PERSONNEL WORK?

The term, as used in this brochure, includes the many activities in which a college educator is engaged while:

- 1 counseling and/or advising students individually and in groups;
- 2 planning, organizing, and administering student programs as they relate to the environment of the particular college or college community;
- 3 supervising programs which form the background of, and consequently influence, student life;
- 4 working cooperatively with all other agencies effecting the over-all college program; and
- 5 implementing the development of college student programming through gathering data, evaluating, and interpreting its significance;
- 6 identifying and developing student leadership.

No part of any college is more closely related to its individual personality or reflects more surely the stage of its development than its student personnel program. Understanding the variability in such programs and the value and significance of the many different patterns they may take helps one recognize that there is no single model program to be followed blindly.



# HOW DOES THE STUDENT PERSONNEL WORKER FUNCTION?

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All student personnel work is directed toward assisting the student to achieve a maximum academic development and, in this process, to reach maximum personal development. This objective is based on the assumption that the two goals are entirely compatible with and lead to the maximum institutional achievement and the ultimate benefit of society. The student personnel staff member works at different times with the individual student, with student groups, with faculty members and fellow administrators, and with agencies within the community of which the college is a part.

As this definition indicates, student personnel work includes many persons whose titles may not identify them immediately with this field. Those who plan and effect programs for recruitment and admissions, orientation, academic and personal counseling, residence halls, health services, veterans' affairs, financial aids, student unions, intra-

murals, religious activities, fraternities and sororities, foreign students, and placement are student personnel workers.

With the individual student, the work is largely that of advising and counseling. Here there is a wide range of activities; at one time it may mean providing information or direction which will help to simplify the student's activity, to reduce the time and energy he expends, and to lessen friction as he pursues his objective. At other times it may involve personal and confidential concerns, sometimes requiring extensive and careful investigation.

The results are the student's acceptance of his responsibility in understanding himself, in disciplining himself for more constructive attitudes. The contact with students can usually be classified in the categories of the personal, the social, the academic, the financial, the vocational and the healthful, though these are of necessity interrelated and, at times, defy precise classification.

With the assistance of the personnel worker, the student has the opportunity to discover for himself his proper relationship to college life; in particular to place of residence and dining, organized student activities, health service, and other agencies of the college and community. In this function the personnel worker actually becomes a teacher without a classroom, but nevertheless with the role and responsibility for a kind of teaching on the campus as a whole.

Another important function of the student personnel worker is interpretation of the personnel program and its objectives to all affected and interested agencies on the college campus and in the college community. College student

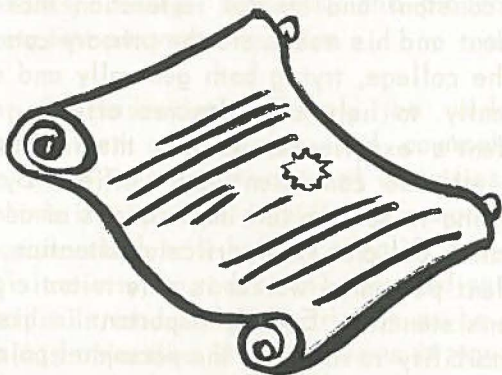
personnel workers accept the responsibility for constant and careful reiteration that the student and his needs are the primary concern of the college, trying both generally and specifically to help all agencies affecting the student's experience, so that the impact on him may be consistent and unified. By attempting to see the full implications of administrative policies in a particular situation, the student personnel worker is able to anticipate inconsistencies. Equally important is his responsibility to interpret the personnel point of view without inviting criticism of paternalism or overprotectiveness.

Administratively, the student personnel dean is responsible for stimulating all staff members toward a student-oriented viewpoint. His supervision of personnel programs must reflect his allegiance to this point of view and should be characterized by a desire to implement the staff performance easily and surely toward this objective. Thus, he has the opportunity to inspire a similar point of view among other college staff members, who are responsible for programs in related fields.

When the student personnel point of view is represented in all significant college committees, the immediate and practical aspects of student services will naturally result. A major function of the student personnel worker is to project this viewpoint into all future planning of the college.

The maintenance of personnel records is an effective means for implementing adequate student service on the college campus. The process of building adequate and full records of the student's experience and growth during his college years is itself a major service of student personnel work.





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## WHAT QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS ARE DESIRED?

The student personnel worker must have a genuine interest in people; he should be healthy physically and emotionally, and he should enjoy being of service to others.

He must be able to understand the problems of others, and on the basis of this understanding give them assistance without himself becoming involved in the problem at hand.

The student personnel worker should have physical stamina, for his assignment is often arduous and demanding. He must be able to function effectively at inconvenient and irregular hours, and to adjust to the unexpected and unusual. Both in planning and in actual performance he must be flexible.

If he is to move forward professionally, he must have the ability to gather and relate data, to analyze it, and to formulate plans for constructive action on the basis of his con-



clusions. In effect, he must be able to do graduate work.

The dean will, of course, teach by example as well as precept, and will demonstrate the qualities he encourages students to develop. His standards of conduct must be high. He will accept, naturally, opportunities to demonstrate on the campus and in the community his interest in the welfare of others and his willingness to serve them. His attitude of acceptance will not only serve as a standard for others to emulate but also provide the basis for his work with many different personalities and conditions. Patience and a sense of humor, especially that humbling ability to laugh at oneself in awkward situations, are important and coveted characteristics.

## **HOW DOES ONE PREPARE FOR PERSONNEL WORK?**

The preparation and training of the college student personnel worker is achieved in a variety of ways. Many of those now in this work received most of their training on the job.

In fact, many of them find their way into the field as a result of discovering special interests and skills while working with students as individuals, or as groups of individuals, in the college community. The revelation of this interest and special ability often comes belatedly and often represents something of a deviation from the original professional plan.

Training in an academic discipline, which qualifies one for teaching, facilitates the student personnel worker's acceptance by his faculty colleagues, and prepares him for the dual function often required of him in the smaller college.

Today, however, more persons enter the field as a result of decisions made early and through the medium of training basic to their professional functioning, in such areas as higher education, psychology, sociology, administration, and related fields. Many institutions now offer practical training (usually reserved for those fulfilling academic requirements in these specialized curricula) through graduate assistantships in student personnel. A number of colleges offer advanced degrees especially designed for the person whose professional objective is college student personnel work.



## **WHAT SALARY MAY ONE EXPECT?**

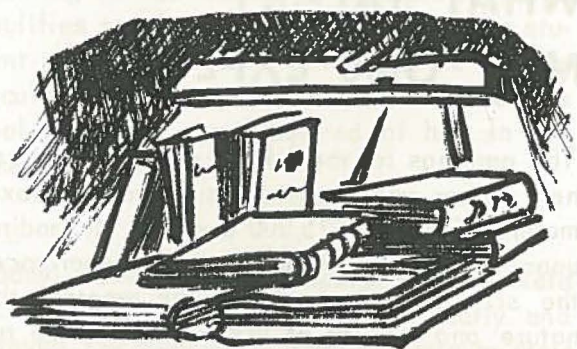
The earnings for the full-time student personnel worker vary considerably, from approximately \$5,000 to \$25,000 per year, depending upon the extent of education and experience, the size and complexity of the program, the nature and quality of his administrative responsibility, and the length of his service.

In addition, some significant fringe benefits are group, life, and health insurance; a retirement plan; and superior school advantages for children. Most student personnel workers, except full-time counselors, carry administrative responsibility and many have an opportunity to do a limited amount of teaching. Except in the beginning levels in the field, student personnel workers are employed regularly on a twelve-month basis with summer vacation.

## **WHAT IS THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT?**

The physical environments of educational communities vary as much as college facilities differ. A properly equipped office and space for meeting with students and others with whom the staff member works are normally provided. The atmosphere of the campus and of the office is basically intellectual. The total environment is generally rich in stimulation for academic, cultural, and social growth.





## HOW DOES ONE GET INTO THIS WORK?

Those persons entering the field of student personnel work enter it at any age and from various kinds of college assignments. However, due to the specialized training now available to those making a decision to enter this field early, the number entering it immediately upon completion of their advanced training is increasing.

The level of entry depends largely on the worker's background and experience, though the nature and size of the student personnel program with which he is identifying himself condition the importance of the assignment and the title of the worker. Most persons begin as residence hall or fraternity or sorority advisors, or as assistants to the dean with special assignment. Common titles are "counselor," "coordinator," "director," "advisor," and "dean," with the subtitles "assistant" and "associate" used with widely varying meaning as to status, staff relationships, and salary. The wide variety of titles indicates the infinite variation of the pattern of student personnel work on college campuses.



# WHERE MAY ONE OBTAIN ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

For additional information relevant to student personnel work, we suggest:

## SOME FURTHER READINGS

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